

# Managers Letter

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## Differentiating Yourself as an Edu-Leader™ in the New Millennium

by *Stuart R. Levine*

**A**s businesses transform themselves in our knowledge-based economy, a new group of highly admired leaders is springing forth. Known as edu-leaders, these individuals will focus on moving people and organizations forward by teaching and increasing the competency of their employees. As leaders for the new millennium, they also will play an integral role in driving core values and building trusting relationships through effective communication. This article describes six skill sets that will distinguish the edu-leader in the 21st century and provides tips for enhancing edu-leader skills.

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***“Leaders today must know themselves. In the past, people could rely on organizations to chart their career paths. Going forward, individuals will bear greater responsibility for their personal development.”***

— *Levine*

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### TO ENHANCE EDU-LEADER SKILLS —

#### *Become core-value driven*

Core values serve as our foundation for action, reflecting our belief system and defining who we are. The fundamentals of ethics, spirituality, family and intellectual curiosity derive from strong beliefs and character. Identifying and revisiting these beliefs strengthens leaders. Commitment to core values helps bolster self-confidence and improves the likelihood of success.

In the past, workers relied on organizations to chart their career paths. Going forward, individuals will assume greater responsibility for their career and personal development. Leaders today must be confident in their work and empowered by their beliefs and skills. Those who want to succeed must find out how they can make the greatest contribution to their organizations and communities.

When they identify their own personal set of core values and understand the unique advantages they bring, they will be better able to recognize career opportunities. Such understanding is key to improving skills and knowing how to accept assignments that are tailored to one's individual performance style.

#### *Become process driven*

As we enter the new millennium, speed and quality will be foremost imperatives. Some companies are already moving so fast, they are neglecting to focus on their internal environments — a condition that may lead to chaos, ineffective internal communication, emotional disconnects and frustration. Such distractions inhibit process-driven thinking and impede success. All combined, they lead to imbalance, which has a huge negative impact on decision making by depleting positive energy and weakening the positioning of the decision maker.

Staying in business amid competition and developing meaningful, productive relationships over time requires a different kind of planning and leadership. To be responsive to market conditions and move people forward, leaders must encourage creativity and flexibility. In addition, they must advocate clear planning processes as opportunities for team building and analysis of results. Embracing proper sequences will sharpen personal and organizational effectiveness.

#### *Become relationship driven*

As we steadfastly invest in new technologies, we also must approach with urgency our development of and investment in people. People understand, desire, trust and form stronger relationships with leaders who commit to their growth. Trust, which is so crucial to relationship building, is developed when people are able to listen to and communicate with each other.

Positive hormones produced by human contact are known to promote trust and bonding. Correspondingly, researchers at Carnegie Mellon University found that people who spend even a few hours each week on the Internet experienced higher levels of depression and loneliness. In addition, absence of human contact in an organization has been found to lead to disrespect and dissatisfaction on the

job. The result is that good people leave and those who remain are unhappy. While e-mail and voice mail are efficient, face-to-face contact is essential to meaningful communication.

Today's world requires greater communication among all components of business operation. What we envisioned in the last decade as soft skills — communication, working with others, developing relationships — have become vital skills for success in the future.

### *Learn to distill and share information*

Until recently, securing information was enough to ensure power. In the 21st century, the process of distilling and sharing information will become the definable asset. When information is shared, it becomes part of a company's knowledge base, helping create better products, services and organizations. In a world where knowledge and skills are completely portable, people are attracted to organizations that afford them the greatest opportunity to grow, communicate, enhance their skills and contribute in meaningful ways.

Edu-leaders will harness information technology and use it as a vehicle to increase information sharing. They will strengthen relationships with key constituents and colleagues by expressing trust and respect through the sharing of timely and meaningful information.

Edu-leaders will exhibit the discipline to deliver a uniform message to both internal and external customers regarding the company, its products and its vision for the future. When everyone on board communicates consistent messages in line with a single vision, an organization becomes much stronger, more focused and able to point in the same direction to produce desired revenues and results.

### *Shift from product focus to talent focus*

The nature of competition has changed. Therefore edu-leaders will encourage others to broaden their focus from products and services to the people who create and deliver them. Success in tomorrow's marketplace will go to the companies that attract the best global talent and develop an integrative and supportive workforce. The new paradigm for competition will no longer be about just selling products and services into the marketplace, but about attracting and retaining qualified employees.

### *Transition from "me" to "we"*

Success in the new millennium also will be defined by the ability to motivate, deploy and engage work teams. Alignment of people within an organization usually stems from a clear understanding of the mission, goals and objectives of the organization. By definition, a mission statement establishes the purpose for being and helps assess how to properly deploy energies and resources. When mission and core values are married, they provide a template for all business decisions and actions.

Shifting the cultural baseline in the face of organizational change is a difficult challenge. It takes respect, intensity and commitment to staying the course. Great leaders will not allow themselves to be spun off course by other people, distractions or disrespect. They will have the courage to stand up and establish rules. Their goal will be to move the entire workforce to higher ground and they will constantly use their own actions as a model for others to follow.

Focusing on a company's desired culture is essential. So is acknowledging that culture is built one brick at a time. Organizations must avoid viewing cultural change as an enormous, single event. It is actually lots of little events over time, which resonate an environment of fairness and decency. Edu-leaders understand the role of such positive vibrations in drawing people closer and creating a healthy organizational atmosphere.

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Stuart R. Levine is Chairman and CEO of Stuart Levine and Associates LLC, an international consulting and training firm. The company focuses on three core competencies: organizational assessment and strategic planning founded on mission and core value statements, the development of organizational cultures that encourage effective internal communication and customized leadership training programs. The company won the 1999 *Innovator of the Year Award* by PricewaterhouseCoopers and Bank of New York for Techno-Bridge®, a leadership training program for technology professionals. You can visit the company Web site at [www.stuartlevine.com](http://www.stuartlevine.com). Stuart has spoken extensively to audiences worldwide on the subject of leadership and organizational change. As former CEO of Dale Carnegie Training, Stuart authored *The Leader in You*. He currently is a contributing author to the Financial Times Management of England's international book *Management 21C: New Visions for the Millennium* to be published in the fall of 1999.

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